

ANDERSONVILLE

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# Civil War Episodes

## Andersonville

Excerpts from newspapers and other sources

From the files of the  
Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection

# Wirz and Andersonville

To the New York Herald Tribune:

I noticed a letter in Sunday's Herald Tribune in regard to Captain Wirz of Andersonville fame. I am interested in the subject of Southern war prisons as my wife's uncle died in Andersonville and one of my father's intimate friends suffered in Libby. Further, I knew slightly General John H. Stibbs, who was the youngest member of the military commission which tried Henry Wirz for the cruelties of Andersonville, and I have a copy of General Stibbs's pamphlet giving his recollections of the trial.

This commission, headed by Major General Lew Wallace, contained other officers of equal ability and character. It sat for about fifty days making an exhaustive inquiry into the subject and brought out a great deal of evidence against Wirz as being guilty of not only mass cruelty to the prisoners under his control but of murder committed by him in person on a helpless prisoner who had attempted to escape but had been recaptured. Evidence from Confederate sources demonstrated the shocking conditions at Andersonville and condemned the prison management. In August, 1864, there were more than 33,000 men within the inclosure and the deaths during that month numbered 2,992.

A report by Colonel D. T. Chandler, Assistant Adjutant General and Inspector General of the Confederate Army severely condemned the management of the prison and recommended a change in the command of the post. This report was indorsed on the back as being submitted to the Secretary of War and stated, "The condition of the prison at Andersonville is a reproach to us as a nation." It was further indorsed by J. A. Campbell, Assistant Secretary of War, stating in part, "These reports show a condition of things at Andersonville which call very loudly for the interposition of the department."

Memoirs of Solon Hyde, hospital steward of the 17th Ohio Infantry,

captured at Chickamauga and afterward confined at Andersonville and taken from the pen to serve in the prison hospital, give a very vivid story of conditions at the prison and of Wirz's actions toward the prisoners.

Goldwin Smith, well known English educator and publicist, was in this country during the Civil War and inspected the prison camp for Confederates at Chicago, the prisoners' hospital at Baltimore, and saw at Annapolis the first batch of prisoners exchanged from Andersonville. He states that these returned prisoners from Andersonville were living skeletons and that the treatment of Federal prisoners in some of the Confederate prisons was known to be most inhuman and in the Andersonville prison camp it was devilish.

The hookworm theory is interesting but hardly plausible. Acting Assistant Surgeon J. C. Bates, a Confederate officer who was on duty at Andersonville for some months, when asked to state from his observations of the conditions and surroundings of the prisoners his professional opinion as to what proportion of deaths occurring there were the result of the circumstances and surroundings which he had related replied as follows: "I feel myself safe in saying that 75 per cent of those who died might have been saved had these unfortunate men been properly cared for as to food, clothing, bedding and so forth."

OTIS B. DAUCHY.

Townshend, Vt., April 25, 1934.





Alan S. Welper for The New York Times

In the cemetery at the Andersonville National Historic Site, the tombstones nearly touch because the 13,000 Union soldiers who died at the Andersonville prison were buried shoulder to shoulder. Two of the cemetery's 150,000 annual visitors inspected the close-ranked markers recently.

## At a Civil War Prison, A Salute to All P.O.W.'s

### Museum Is Planned at Site in Georgia

By RONALD SMOTHERS  
Special to The New York Times

ANDERSONVILLE, Ga., Oct. 18 — What was once a field rank with pools of fetid water and odors of gangrene and death now gently rolls with hillocks of fluffy broom sage and gold and purple asters. One hundred and thirty years ago, when it was encircled by stockade walls and strewn with sway-backed tents, the field was Andersonville, the infamous Confederate camp where 45,000 Union troops were imprisoned, and where 13,000 died.

It is a haunting place whose name over time became synonymous with the horror, privations, disease and thwarted escapes common to all prisoners of war. Now, with President Clinton's signing of an appropriations bill last month, Andersonville will also become the site of the nation's only museum dedicated to American P.O.W.'s from the Revolution to Somalia.

"It won't be just some showplace on a hill," declared James B. Stockdale, the retired Navy admiral who was the highest ranking American prisoner of war in the Vietnam War



The New York Times

Andersonville will house a museum dedicated to American prisoners of war.

and who is serving, with his wife, Sybil, as honorary chairmen of Friends of Andersonville, the private group supporting the museum.

"You will be in the trenches, treading the ground that men agonized over then, just as you yourself did in your time," Admiral Stockdale said. "There is a lot of drama that went on in that prison."

The planned museum, which is expected to be completed by 1996, will be part of the Andersonville National Historic Site in southwestern Georgia. Andersonville, a village of 260 people, is about 25 miles northeast of former President Jimmy Carter's home in Plains, Ga.

In addition to the grassy expanse that once was the prison stockade, the 475-acre site includes two small brick buildings and a national cemetery holding the remains of the 13,000 Union troops who died in the prison, as well as the remains of 2,000 other veterans from the Spanish-American War to the Vietnam War. The cemetery, with its close-ranked, white stone markers, draws about 150,000 visitors a year.

Mr. Clinton's signature approving Federal financing for the \$9 million museum comes 24 years after the grounds of Andersonville were first taken over by the National Park Service and designated by Congress as the Andersonville National Historic Site. But only in the last 10 years did private groups and the Park Service begin to push for a museum as a memorial to P.O.W.'s throughout the nation's history.

For the estimated 70,000 surviving Americans who were once prisoners of war, most of them from World War II, the approval of Federal financing comes just as time is running out, members of veterans groups said.

William Bearisto, 70, who is president of the 30,000-member American Ex-Prisoners of War, which helped raise more than \$3 million in private funds for the museum, said he looks forward to its completion.

"It will bring back a lot of hurtful feelings for some of us and it may bring back some of the shame that many of us were made to feel, as if it was our fault that we were captured," he said. "But this is our No. 1 priority, and we are 40 years late in getting this memorial."

Although the Andersonville military prison operated for only 14 months in the Civil War, it came to symbolize much about that conflict. In earlier wars there was little need for large, permanent prisons because prisoners of war were usually exchanged quickly after signing a pledge not to fight again.

That ended in the Civil War, when Union commanders, tired of capturing and recapturing the same Confederates, refused to make the exchanges. And Confederate commanders refused to exchange black prisoners of war, saying they were fugitive slaves.

After the war, Union forces changed the camp's commandant,



Capt. Henry Wirtz, making him the only person executed for war crimes in the Civil War. Later, private societies from the North maintained the camp and its cemetery.

But the historic importance of the former prison camp was never much appreciated by some Southerners. Many were quick to note that no one had bothered to preserve Camp Douglas in Chicago, a Union stockade where 15 percent of the 30,000 Confederates imprisoned there died, or a camp in Elmira, N.Y., where 32 percent of the 12,000 Confederate prisoners died.

Fred Boyles, Andersonville's superintendent, said the museum's design will recall that of a prison. Its outer face will be a series of windowless, low-rise wall sections. An inner courtyard will be ringed with iron gates and barbed wire, and three "guard towers" will rise above the roof.

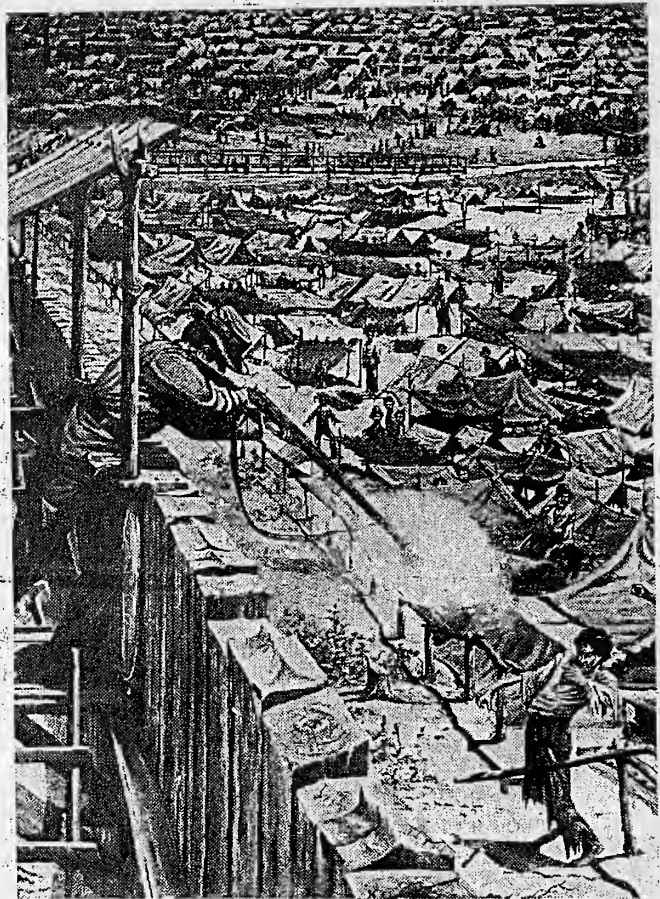
Inside will be diaries and oral histories and a concrete cross erected by prisoners at Camp O'Donnell, the terminus of the 1942 Bataan death march, which some P.O.W.'s in World War II called "the Andersonville of the Pacific."

The exhibits will emphasize the common experiences of P.O.W.'s: the capture, the forced marches, the shortages of water, food and medicine. Other exhibits will deal with escapes — more often unsuccessful than successful — and with the anguish of prisoners' families.

James S. Edwards of Albany, N.Y., a former president of the ex-prisoners of war group, remembered long discussions about food when he was a prisoner. A former crewman of a B-24 bomber, he was shot down over Germany and held for nearly six months near the end of World War II. "If Betty Grable and a plate of food was put out before us, we would have gone for the food first," he said.

While Mr. Edwards and the diarist of Andersonville recall being ignored by their captors, Admiral Stockdale, who served seven and a half years as a P.O.W. — an experience he recounted many times as Ross Perot's running mate in the 1992 Presidential election — recalls something quite different.

"God, how I wish I could have had a little of that neglect and indifference," he said recently, referring to the "political re-education" and torture sessions that he and other prisoners underwent at the hands of Communist political officers. "Andersonville got down to about one guard to 30 or 40 prisoners. I spent two years in leg irons and in solitary with 11 other prisoners, and there were 2 officers and 33 guards to watch us."



In a painting, a Confederate guard shoots down one of the 45,000 Union prisoners who were held at the Andersonville camp in south Georgia.

## Seeking Certainty on Lincoln's Killer

By Reuters

Two historians and 22 descendants of the family of John Wilkes Booth today began a legal effort to have Booth's body exhumed to test a theory that someone else was buried in his grave and that he got away after assassinating President Abraham Lincoln.

A petition, filed by two Booth historians, Nathaniel Orlowek and Arthur Ben Chltry, was filed with the Baltimore Circuit Court seeking permission to remove the body from an unmarked section of the family plot in Green Mount Cemetery in Baltimore.

It suggested that the body buried in the grave was not that of

Booth, who shot Lincoln at Washington's Ford Theater in 1865, and that Federal troops hunting him might have killed an innocent man at a Virginia farm 12 days after the assassination.

"This historical project is intended to prove or disprove longstanding theories on Booth's escape," said Mark Zaid, a Washington lawyer acting for the descendants and the historians.

Mr. Zaid said that if the exhumation was approved, the remains would be examined by forensic scientists from the Smithsonian Institution's Museum of Natural History, the National Museum of Health and Medicine, and other experts.

NYT 10/25/94



## TELEVISION REVIEW

# Disgrace of the Civil War In a Profusion of Detail

By CARYN JAMES

Prison camps are horrific by their nature, even when conditions are humane. And there were particular, inhumane horrors attached to the Confederate camp called Andersonville. "A disgrace to civilization" is the way a Confederate inspector (played by William H. Macy) describes the camp, and in the course of TNT's four-hour mini-series tomorrow and Monday night, a profusion of historically accurate details backs him up. The filthy, brutal conditions included lack of food, makeshift tents that served as shelter, and a polluted stream that ran through the grounds, downstream from where Confederate soldiers dumped sewage. Built to house 8,000 Union prisoners, Andersonville came to hold 45,000. In 1864 and 1865, more than 12,000 of them died.

But in this ambitious, disappointing mini-series, the history that made Andersonville unique is cloaked in a drama as familiar and generic as any old prison movie. The story begins when a regiment from New Bedford, Mass., is captured and sent to Andersonville. There they find a group of unscrupulous, knife-wielding prisoners called "the raiders," who steal from and otherwise terrorize the honest prisoners.

Soon the Massachusetts men join with a group from Pennsylvania mining country and try to dig a tun-

## ANDERSONVILLE

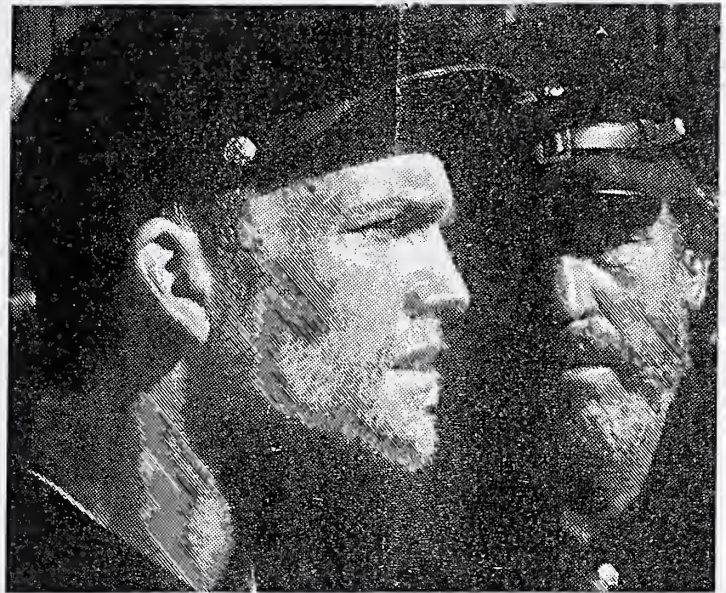
TNT, Sunday and Monday at 8 P.M.  
Eastern time

Directed by John Frankenheimer; written and produced by David W. Rintels; Ethel Winant and John Frankenheimer, executive producers; Diane Smith, co-producer; music by Gary Chang. A production of Turner Network Television.

WITH: Jarrod Emick (Josiah Day), Frederic Forrest (Sergeant McSpadden), Ted Marcoux (Martin Blackburn), Tom Aldredge (Trimble), Carmen Argenziano (Hopkins), Jayce Bartok (Billy), Frederick Coffin (Collins), Cliff De Young (Sgt. John Gleason), Denis Forest (Mad Matthew), Justin Henry (Tyce) and Jan Triska (Captain Wirz).

nel out of the camp. Despite the Civil War surroundings, we've seen too much of this before, in everything from 1930's gangster films to "Stalag 17."

In his long career in television and film, the director John Frankenheimer has always risen to the level of his best material, notably in movies like "The Manchurian Candidate." Here, the script lets him down with one-dimensional characters. Josiah Day (Jarrod Emick) is the nominal hero, and he is all too angelic-looking. He is the second in command of the New Bedford regiment, and his sergeant, McSpadden (Frederic Forrest), is a predictably feisty, self-sacrificing leader. The raiders are especially clichéd, resembling



Doug Hyun/Turner Pictures

Jarrod Emick, left, with Frederic Forrest as his sergeant.

smirking schoolyard bullies. And the man who is potentially the most intriguing is scarcely developed. He is Jim (Peter Murnik), a prisoner who leads an insurrection against the raiders and whose presence raises thorny questions about vengeance and justice.

Scene for scene, Mr. Frankenheimer knows how to build tension, even when it fails to lead anywhere surprising. And the second half of the mini-series is more absorbing than the first. It includes some large-scale set pieces, including a battle between the raiders and the rest of the prisoners that involves thousands of men. The episode creates a civil war

among Union soldiers in Andersonville, reflecting the war outside.

As the mini-series goes on, the prisoners become sick and weak, showing the effects of malnutrition. Such images are inevitably moving, but they can't make up for the sluggish drama that has led there.

The cast also includes Cliff De Young as the head of the Pennsylvania regiment and Jan Triska as Captain Wirz, Andersonville's Swiss-born commander. Wirz was the only Confederate soldier executed for war crimes. If only "Andersonville" had done justice to such compelling, tragic history.

